



Vocational Skills Development and Training in Agriculture (ATVET)

Background and Context

Africa continues to face a youth bulge, with over 60% of the population classified as young people. This presents the continuous challenge of unemployment across the continent. Agriculture presents a major opportunity for addressing youth unemployment while simultaneously addressing food security and boosting economic growth and development. It is within this context that The Malabo Declaration was signed. Its seven key commitments aim to achieve sustainable and equitable economic development, job creation, poverty reduction and income through agricultural productivity. The Declaration also identifies the centrality of youth and women, committing to:

- ▶ Establish and / or strengthen inclusive public-private partnerships for at least five (5) priority agricultural commodity value chains with strong linkages to smallholder agriculture;
- ▶ Create job opportunities for at least 30% of the youth within agricultural value chains;
- ▶ Support and facilitate preferential entry and participation for women and youth in gainful and attractive agri-business opportunities.

Despite the efforts of young people and women to engage in profitable agricultural enterprise, systemic challenges, structural, cultural, and socio-economic factors have hindered progress. Factors impeding youth involvement in agriculture include access to land, finance and other resources, access to regional and international profitable markets, low agricultural productivity, seasonality of agricultural incomes, lack of public investment in agriculture, lack of interest from the youth, information asymmetry and sparse use of innovation and technology. Many governments have tried to address these issues, with limited results, due mainly to uncoordinated approaches and a lack of clear policy coherency, especially with regard to National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs).

KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ Achieving Malabo goals of agriculture growth and food security is hampered by a lack of critical skills in the sector due to outdated curricula and lack of alignment to private sector demands.
- ▶ Youth entrepreneurship and youth empowerment through capacity building is a solution to the youth bulge and ensuring food security. Targeted capacity building should strengthen leadership abilities, personal development and competencies such as self-confidence, innovation and creativity, the ability to take initiative, willingness to take calculated risks and to collaborate in the agriculture space.
- ▶ Capacity building in agriculture should be holistic, encompassing the environment, organization and institutions responsible for training and the individual's capacity and willingness to undertake and utilize the training.
- ▶ Investing in *the capacity and skills of smallholder farmers* generally offers best return on investment as it expands employment opportunities and incomes in rural areas beyond the agricultural sector due to spill-over effects.

Education, skills development and technical training are central to increased agricultural production and rural employment in Africa. Recent trends in African agricultural growth have been positive but sustaining these trends depends not only on direct factors that affect agricultural productivity, but also on institutional capacity to design and



implement programmes and policies as well as on human capacity building and skills development along entire value chains. Agriculture technical vocation education and training (ATVET) offer one way to achieve this objective.

Main Challenges to Skill Development of Youth in Agriculture

Education and training have historically supported growth in the agricultural sector by producing extension officers and hands-on technicians who support the production capacities of farmers and other value chain actors. However, from the mid-1990s until the mid-2000s, the value of ATVET was greatly neglected. This was especially true for rural areas, where ATVET could have significantly enhanced the agricultural skills. Training in agriculture in Africa is still far off pace in terms of adequately meeting current skill and labour-market needs and conditions.

ATVET in Africa is generally highly fragmented and, in many countries, not integrated into the overall TVET education system. ATVET is given low importance by governments and so it lacks sufficient financing. In addition, the demands and needs of the private sector are not identified

and private entities are often not considered as important stakeholders. Considering the fact that more and more farmers and youth are being integrated into agricultural value chains, however, interaction and synergies between public and private employers and service providers could give greater scope for the expansion of ATVET, as well as increased responsiveness of the system to provide the necessary skills for the modernisation of the sector.

Under-education and lack of skills of young workers is also of significant concern. The education system is ill prepared to meet the needs of the private sector and is not creating the skills and knowledge required for the continent's growth. Another major challenge are barriers to accessing vocational education, especially for young women, which limits their productivity and the acquisition of skills.

In light of these challenges, there is a need to promote youth empowerment – specifically, education, skills, knowledge, access to land and other production-related factors – as critical ingredients of the success of young people as entrepreneurs. Indeed, the implementation of CAADP presents enormous potential for accelerated job creation and skills development. Therefore, research and development which connects young people to job creation

opportunities, including within the green economy, should be accelerated. Equal emphasis must also be placed on formal and non-formal skill development. Young people need complementary education and training services such as financial and business education as well as entrepreneurship training and coaching, especially in the area of agribusinesses.

Recommended Actions for ATVET Reforms in Malabo Domestication

Taking the identified problems of the existing skills development systems in African countries into consideration, comprehensive efforts will be needed in order to develop ATVET into a demand-driven system which combines education, training, knowledge development and skill-enhancing techniques as well as being integrated into countries' general TVET systems and bringing together public and private players. The following steps are therefore important:

- ▶ Recognise the need to develop professional and vocational capacities as a cross-cutting strategy under the CAADP process. At regional and continental level,

efforts to mainstream ATVET and to exchange good practices should be established within the CAADP mechanism.

- ▶ The CAADP mechanism should support new and innovative models which incorporate agriculture into existing TVET systems and / or which generate new institutions for agriculture.
- ▶ Develop appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems to trace the impact of ATVET, especially in the Biennial Review process, with regard to skill development, trainees, employability and / or entrepreneurship of graduates.
- ▶ Develop and support new partnership approaches – some of which have already been tested by some value-chain programmes.
- ▶ Create incentives that encourage private-sector participation in ATVET skills development.
- ▶ Support farmer organisations to assess training needs and compile overviews of available training institutions.
- ▶ Lobby for improved or modified curricula as well as for demand-driven training courses within the country or region.





- ▶ Transform the ATVET system to include agri-business and entrepreneurship training components that attract more young people and produces better farmers.

From a policy perspective, priority recommendations for ATVET enhancement include the following:

- ▶ Recognise the importance of skills development, agriculture education and training as key strategic areas for the planning National Agriculture Investment Programs (NAIPs).
- ▶ Provide financing for skills development and ATVET within NAIPs.
- ▶ Prioritise the development of a functioning National Qualification Framework (NQF).
- ▶ Integrate non-formal and informal training into formal ATVET.
- ▶ Develop youth agribusiness strategies and implementation plans, including monitoring and evaluation, at continental, regional and country levels, placing higher emphasis on skill development and entrepreneurship training.

Further Information

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Published by: African Union Commission - Department for Rural Economy and Agriculture (AUC-DREA) and African Union Development Agency – NEPAD

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Supported by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

ISBN-Number: 978-1-928527-00-8

Date: June 2019